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## Sen. Stamas working to bring 'Imagination Library' to children across Michigan

**LANSING** – State Sen. Tony Stamas, R-Midland, is working to help promote early childhood literacy and is hoping to implement a program that provides books to children five years of age and younger.

"Reading is the cornerstone to any child's education," Stamas said. "The most important thing we can do for our children is to encourage them to read and develop a love for learning."

The Imagination Library program was started by Dolly Parton through the Dollywood Foundation. Children who are enrolled in the program receive a children's book in the mail once a month from the time they are born until their fifth birthday.

"When I first heard of this program I was excited and immediately wanted to start working to make it available to children all across Michigan," Stamas said.

Stamas hopes to implement a program that would allow intermediate school districts, local school districts, local units of government, private foundations and non-profit organizations to apply for a state grant that requires a local 50 percent match. The state grants would be used to pay for books for low-income children.

"As the chair of the Senate Committee on Education, I am fully behind this project and I cannot wait to see Michigan's children benefit from it," said Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland. "It is a pleasure to work with Senator Stamas on such a truly great program. I'm glad he has brought this vital program to the attention of the Michigan Senate."

Currently, the Bay-Arenac and Berrien County intermediate school districts, Van Buren Public Schools, Midland County Educational Service Agency, and the United Way of Eaton and Allegan counties are involved in the program.

"The Dolly Parton Imagination Library Project has been used with great results in some Michigan counties already," said Sen. Ron Jelinek, R-Three Oaks. "Introducing children to reading and making books available is one more step that helps insure future success. I look forward to this program becoming a reality for all of Michigan's children."

Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, said: "The experiences of children between birth and entry into school have a profound effect upon their ability to acquire literacy efficiently and effectively. To date, more than 2,000 children are enrolled in The Imagination Library in Allegan County. I wholeheartedly endorse and recommend this program for all of Michigan's children."

The state of Tennessee is operating a statewide program.

Children in Michigan have received books such as "The Very Hungry Caterpillar," "Good Night Gorilla,"

"Corduroy Goes to the Doctor," and "Aesop's Fables."	